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SIMILES FROM THE FOLK SPEECH OF THE SOUTH

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I

Every age has had its share of similes. From the earliest time to the present, the simile has been one of the most conspicuous of figures of speech. Like proverbs and other saws, this figure has persisted in speech and writing as an apt medium of comparison. In profane and sacred literature, it has reflected the spoken word of primitive folk and has expressed to a great extent the embellished thought of the orator and the poet. The homely shepherd and the plowman, the statesman and the priest, the high and the low of the people have found in it a ready instrument for presenting the commonplace and the ideal.

Just how far the use of the simile antedated picture and written language is not definite. We can assume, however, that it was well established in the oral tradition and, therefore, was orally circulated and subjected to variation and new application according to changes in the environment. In this respect, its communal usage and growth parallel the rise of primitive ballads and songs. Sufficient evidence of this traditional method is observed in a number of folk similes in this commentary and in the supplement to be published in a later issue of this journal.

Further evidence of the antiquity of this figure exists in the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians. For instance, war is like two arrows pointed toward one another; peace is like two arrows moving in opposite directions; and justice is like evenly balanced scales. From ancient Greece are the following similes by Aeschylus (B.C. 525-456): "Faithful as dog, the lonely shepherd's pride" and "Stately as a column." Wilstach in his monumental work cites these by Aeschylus and many others as proof of the antiquity of the simile, which he calls "the handmaid of all early word records."¹

¹ Frank J. Wilstach, *A Dictionary of Similes*, Revised Edition, Grosset and Dunlap, New York, 1924.

Wilstach's collection is, furthermore, valuable by way of showing the modernity of the simile. In his dictionary, many thousands of similes from authors chiefly from the time of Shakespeare to the present day are quoted. This quality of modernity, somewhat limited by the survival of old technique and thought, is represented by the following simile, as used in an Associated Press dispatch from Nazi-controlled Paris on June 15, 1940: "The city of light is as dark and quiet as a graveyard at midnight."

The long popularity of the simile raises certain questions concerning the reasons for its tenacity in the language. Why has it survived with all of its trite repetition, variation, and freshness? Certainly among unlettered folk, the simile has fulfilled a distinct service by explaining the unfamiliar by reference to the familiar. Writers, too, have employed it for the same purpose and often with rare charm and effectiveness. In the hand of a John Lyly, it is occasionally verbose and delicately flowered. One of its most striking characteristics has been felt in epigram and humor. Oliver W. Holmes, Josh Billings, Artemus Ward, and other wits have expressed in it some of their most powerful thrusts. Another reason for its survival lies in the structure of the simile itself, especially as it appears in primitive society. Its brevity, crispness, and word coloring have been peculiarly adapted to the folk, as well as to the poets.

II

Any analysis of folk similes should be primarily directed to their aptness in expressing the folk point of view. As generally known, the ways of the folk are characterized by simplicity, brevity, and an exactness which only the feeble-minded do not understand. A cultured society may at times take pride in specious ornateness, but the common folk all but instinctively realize the superiority of simple and direct usage. Many associations with the common people show that such people heartily dislike, as indicated by their snickers and turned-up noses, any effort to befuddle them with big words. Common folk like the ordinary.

If there is one outstanding quality about the majority of folk similes, it is the ordinary. Whenever a commoner likens one of his fellow animals, or some object, or abstraction to another animal, or object, or abstraction, he usually hits the nail on the head. Not at all interested in dactyls and pterodactyls, he sees his ordinary world qualified by a comparison with a universe of diverse objects and forces. With something like primitive wrath or hilarious laugh-

ter and glee, he likens his world unto cats and dogs, mules and jackasses, moles and rabbits, oxen and owls, hogs and misers, clocks and automobiles, sin and itch, ghosts and devils, sinners and saints, lions and lambs, rats and skunks, hell and heaven, hawks and eagles, velvet and cream, blue sky and deep water, a mother's love and God's love. Commonplaces they are, just like hundreds of similes as represented in Wilstach and in my promised supplement.

It is interesting to observe the descriptive terms in similes as applied to animals, objects, and qualities, such as those grouped in twos in the last paragraph. Which are the *big* things or animals, as seen by the folk? They are: bale of cotton, balloon, barn, barrel, cow, elephant, giant, house, life, moon, mountain, and the side of a mountain. Which are the *deaf*? The doorknob, the post, and the stone. Who *swears* the most? Unmistakably, they are: mule skinners, pirates, troopers, and sailors. And furthermore, the list indicates that the troopers and sailors also *curse*.

Compare, if you will, the objects, qualities, and persons that are *bitter* and *sour*. The *bitter* are: crab apple, gall, lemon, and quinine. The *sour* are: crab apple, green apple, hell, kraut, lemon, old maid, old maid's frown, pickle, and vinegar. Which objects and persons are *brown*? They are: autumn, berry, biscuit, chestnut, ginger cake, Indian, nut, and penny. What do people think are *cozy*? A log fire, a love nest, and a nook. Which objects *glitter*? Diamonds, gold, and stars. Whose reputation is characterized by *greediness*? Hogs, pigs, gluttons, and Midas. Who or what are *ill*? Hornets, wasps, and old maids. Who are the *innocent*? Baby, new-born baby, child, and a lamb. Which are the most amusing *laughs*? Those of an ape, a fool, a hyena, a jackass, and a horse. Which are the *quick*? The cat, cricket, dart, devil, eye, flash, gnat, hawk, lightning, greased lightning, linnet, mouse, rabbit, shot, sneeze, squirrel, whip, wink, and saying Jack Robinson. Who or what are the *rich*? Cream, dirt, banker, king, and Croesus. The *poor*? Beggar, church mouse, college boy, gully dirt, hell, Job's turkey, louse, pauper, snake, and a skeleton. Who or what are *talkative*? Magpies, parrots, and politicians. Who or what are *wise*? The fox, the owl, Solomon, and Jupiter.

Another interesting approach to a study of similes is that of the several qualifying terms applied to the same object, quality, or animal. Some of these objects, qualities, or animals have only one or two descriptive words associated with them. For instance, honey is *sweet*; whereas sugar is *white* and *sweet*. But nothing is said

about "And so are you." A preacher is usually *dressed up*, and he may be *good*. A country bumpkin is always *bashful*; and the country maiden, *luscious*. A nag is *bony*. A noose is *tight*. Itch (or seven-year itch) is *old* and *slow*. A gallows is *gruesome*. A Quaker is *quiet* and *sober*. A zebra is always *striped*. Youth is *earnest*, perhaps. Venus has a *figure*, but Mae West is *curved*. And Job's turkey is not only *poor*, but also *old* and *slow*.

When one turns to an examination of the multiple descriptive terms, he finds an amazingly large number of them applied to one object, quality, or animal. The following tabulation is ample proof of this fact.

arrow: fleet, points, straight, swift, true

bear: chubby, grizzly, hugs, hungry, rough, ugly, dormant, sleepy

breeze: balmy, cool, gentle, free, soft

bull: bellows, charges, grins, mad, stout, strong, stubborn, wild, awkward

buzzard: filthy, ragged, nasty, sick, stinks, vomits

cat: active, agile, has many lives, black, cunning, curious, feline, fights, flexible, modest, quick, sleepy, supple

child: capricious, boisterous, dutiful, dependent, imaginative, innocent, irresponsible, plays

cricket: chirps, lively, noisy, quick, smart, spry

death: certain, clammy, fatal, inevitable, pale, silent, still, sure

devil: crazy, drives, feels, fiendish, fights, hateful, hot, mad, mean, naughty, pushes, quick, runs, sleepy, sorry, works, wicked

dirt: cheap, dry, easy, filthy, mean, pale, rich, rotten, weak

dog: barks, brindled, companionable, drunk, faithful, grabs, humble, hungry, lazy, lies, low down, mangy, mean, shaggy, sick, smells, sneaking, sorry, stinks, tired, treated like, works, yellow

dove: coos, mournful, moans, peaceful, sad, tame, tender, white

duck: awkward, loves water, swims, takes to water, ugly, waddles, wobbly

eagle: bald, keen, soars, strong, swift

elephant: big, fat, graceful, heavy, remembers, ponderous, strong, tough

fish: aquatic, cold, crazy, drinks, drunk, finny, loves water, noiseless, scaly, slick, smelly, stinks, swims, like a — out of water

flower: dainty, delicate, fragile, lovely, perishable, welcome, beautiful

fool: acts like, crazy, drunk, dumb, ignorant, laughs

fox: crafty, cunning, dumb, sly, wise

ghost: pale, silent, weird, white

Gibraltar: firm, solid, strong, sturdy

glass: brittle, clear, slick, sharp, shines, slippery, smooth, thick, transparent

goat: as much sense as, smells, stinks, mischievous

gold: bright, good, glitters, pure, shines, yellow

graveyard: eerie, gloomy, quiet

hawk: keen, quick, sharp, sails

hell: cold, crazy, crooked, dumb, fights, funny, hot, long, poor, sour, stinks, strong

wet hen: mad, wild, straggly

setting hen: mad, cross

hog: dirty, drunk, eats like, fat, greasy, greedy, lazy, lousy, ugly

horse: balky, buck-eyed, clumsy, dapple, eats like, laughs, strong, trots, works

hound: hungry, lazy, sneaking

jackass: ears like, stubborn, dumb, crazy, laughs

king: happy, noble, proud, rich

kitten: cunning, cute, frisky, gentle, playful, purrs, tame

lamb: gentle, went in like, innocent, meek, timid, went out like

lightning: fast, flashy, quick, sharp, strikes

lily: fair, floats, pure, white

lion: brave, came in like, carnivorous, ferocious, fierce, out like, kingly, roars, vicious

lullaby: soft, sweet

old maid: cross, full of wants, hopeful, ill, old-fashioned, sour, toothless, ugly

old man: bent, decrepit, grumpy, hoary

molasses: slow, sticky, sweet, thick

moon: big, far, high, mellow, periodic, round, yellow

monkey: agile, cute, comic, looks like, tricky, ugly

mouse: meek, quick, quiet, silent, squeals, timid, spry

mud: clear, fat, mad, oozy, sloppy, sticky, thick, ugly

mule: balky, brays, cantankerous, clumsy, contrary, kicks, hard-headed, obstinate, ornery, strong, stubborn, tough

night: black, calm, dark, quiet, silent, still

ocean: blue, brackish, boundless, calm, deep, expansive, rough, salty, wide

owl: drunk, sleepy, solemn, wise

ox: awkward, bovine, clumsy, dumb, slow, strong, stubborn

parrot: gay, talkative, tempered like, hot

peach: fuzzy, gorgeous, luscious, pretty, soft, sweet

peacock: proud, struts, vain

pie: easy, good, juicy, nice

pig: dirty, eats, fat, greedy, grunts, nasty, potty, sloppy, smells, squeals

pin: clean, neat, sharp, smart, straight

bean pole: skinny, slender, tall, thin

polecat: disagreeable, smells, stinks

politician: crooked, bombastic, talkative

post: deaf and dumb

puppy: cute, friendly, plays

queen: beautiful, haughty, pretty, regal

rabbit: harried, jumps, timid, quick, runs

rainbow: curved, beautiful, colorful, crooked

rake: thin
rail: skinny, stiff, straight, thin
rat: dies like, gray, mean, wet
razor: cuts, keen, sharp
rock: dives like, falls like, firm, hard, heavy, solid, sinks, steady, swims like
rooster: crows, game, polite
rose: blushes, cheeks like, exquisite, fragrant, red, smells sweet, sweet
rubber: elastic, flexible, soft, stretches
sailor: curses, drunk, swears, angry
salesman: nervy and persistent
scarecrow: ragged, shabby, skinny, ugly
Scotchman: stingy and tight
sea: calm, choppy, deep, rough, salty, wide
shoe (old): comfortable, easy, plain, kicked around
silk: fine, glossy, smooth, soft
sin: bad, black, evil, guilty, ugly
skeleton: bony, poor, skinny, slim, thin
sky: blue, clear, gray, high
snake: black, clever, cold-blooded, crooked, hissing, low, mean, poor, poisonous, sinuous, treacherous, slimy
snow: pure, soft, white
soldier: brave, erect, foot-sore, straight
squirrel: climbs, jerky, quick, thrifty
stars: bright, glitter, luminous, innumerable
statue: solemn, still, stands, straight
steel: cold, hard, impervious, strong, tough, true
stone: dead, deaf, flinty, hard, heart like, inanimate, naked
sun: bright, brilliant, early, hot
sunrise: early, red, true
sunset: beautiful, gorgeous, pretty, red
sugar: sweet and white
swamp: boggy, dismal, feverish, muddy
tack: hard, head like, sharp
thunder: abrupt, loud, roars, rumbles, startling
tick: fat, full, tight
tiger: fierce, fights, vicious
time: ceaseless, fast, fleeting, merciless, old
top: dances, nimble, round, spins
train: fast, long, loud, rumbles
truth: naked, honest
Christmas turkey: fat, full, stuffed
Job's turkey: poor, old, slow
turtle: crawls, slow
velvet: glossy, smooth, soft
water: clear, calm, free, runs, smooth, weak, wet
wax: close, slick, tight
whistle: clean, clear, shrill, slick
whip: keen, pops, quick, sharp, smart

wink: quick, suggestive

wind: changeable, breezy, fast, free, gone, runs, silent, strong

March wind: blasty, blustery, high

wolf: blood-thirsty, cunning, hungry, vicious

wool: fleecy, matted, soft

worm: fidgety, emotionless, low

Whenever one hears some of these similes, he is struck by their vigor and epigrammatic power. Characterized by a few simple, predominantly monosyllabic words, these similes are as "keen as a whip" and "flashy as lightning." With precise aim or purpose, their meanings are seldom better expressed. Hundreds of such precise statements illustrate this quality of accuracy. Here are a handful of them, as they are used by the common folk.

aimless as a spent bullet
bled like a stuck pig
bored as a cynic
buck-eyed as a horse
cheery as a robin in spring
cute as a speckled pup under a red wagon
broke as a convict
bushy as a squirrel's tail
dangerous as a cocked gun
dependent as a puppet
dress up like a preacher
dressed up like a sore finger
far-reaching as bad news
fluffy as whipped cream
heady as old wine
mind like a cesspool
nervy as a salesman
wanton as Byron
red as a turkey's snout
slimy as okra
stiff as a mule's tail
straight as a martin to its gourd
poor as gully dirt
true as an arrow (to its mark)
close as your shadow
chatty as a sparrow
bowlegged as pot legs
ugly as a burned maul
faint as the rustle of a petticoat
holds fast as a tick
temperamental as a prima donna (or a chef)
talkative as a clam
swift as a swallow

smooth as a kitten's ear
 poised as a butterfly
 soft as a lullaby
 beautiful as a dew-kissed rose
 pure as the driven snow
 gentle as a lover's caress
 tender as a mother's love
 soft as an angel's wing

Another group of similes, although limited in number, is significant on account of their indefinite comparisons and their general adaptability to the necessary elasticity of the occasion. The original of the supplement contains the following indefinite ones:

crooked as I am
 ugly as I am
 tell more lies than I can
 hurts like nobody's business
 long as my arm (or your arm)
 slow as ever was
 mean as they make them
 crazy as he looks
 rough as they make them
 thick as your foot
 low as they come
 as much trouble as all my money
 far as you can see

In the collection there are a few comparisons which bear all the earmarks of the common man's ability to make, whenever the need arises, a thrust with dagger-like precision. Sarcasm, irony, and general pungency are noticeable in the following comparisons.

graceful as an elephant
 becoming as a clown
 mind like a cesspool
 talkative as a clam
 clear as mud
 comely as a cow in a cage
 dives like a feather (or a rock, or a shot)
 swims like a rock

Incidentally, the qualifying word is sometimes not the customary one, but rather one with an entirely different meaning. Observe the following:

blue as Monday morning
 yellow as a dog
 hard as vinegar
 hot as a ginger mill

Associated with sarcastic and ironical similes, already illustrated above, are the exaggerated comparisons of animals, objects, and abstractions. The familiarity of such exaggerations—many of them pure caricatures—is evident in the following examples.

hugs like a bear
grins like a bull
laughs like a hyena
kisses like a cow
grins like a Cheshire cat
talks like a mowing machine
snores like a sawmill
shiny as the seat of your pants
takes in gossip like a sponge takes in water
bold as a miller's shirt
lasts no longer than a snowball in hell
more kinfolks than a microbe
busy as a one-armed paper hanger with
the seven-year itch
more fun than a barrel of monkeys
hissed like twenty thousand kettles
talks like a Dutch uncle to a sick pig
polite as a rooster
hot as a hen in a wool basket

III

Apart from the discussion of the meaning and usages of these similes is that of the structural nature of them. As already observed, the simple and monosyllabic words are the most frequently recurring ones in these expressed comparisons. Few words, usually four or five, are sufficient to make the likeness complete. Simple adjectives are the most prevalent limiting part of speech, usually preceded by *as* or *so* and followed by *as*. These adjectives, like the objects, abstractions, or animals compared, are themselves sometimes restricted by other words or phrases. When the adjective is used, it appears as used in the following cases.

as blue as ink
so deep as a well
as easy as taking candy from a baby
as broad as a sixty-dollar mare
as devoid of romance as last year's bird's nest
as hot as if he had a belly full of wasps

The comparative degree of the adjective is observed in the following similes.

meaner than Shylock
softer than cotton
(make) more money than the mint
(eye) bigger than his belly
(hand is) quicker than the eye
stranger than fiction

An unusual use of the adjective is that of the adjective *like*, used not only as the descriptive word but also as the connecting word. The following three examples show this unusual form.

like a fish out of water
like as two fried eggs
like a red, red rose

The second most frequent limiting word is the verb, although not so frequent as the adjective. Here are some instances of its use, as linked with the connecting word, *like*.

hugs like a bear
works like fighting fire
shines like new
sheds water like a duck's back

The least used of all the descriptive words in the similes of this collection is the noun. The following examples illustrate its use.

fist like a ham
legs like toothpicks
lips like tulips
voice like the rasp of a file
ears like a jackass
head shaped like a coconut

The most peculiar construction—in fact, the only instance of its kind—is this one: like father like son.

Sometimes the structural elements in similes are monotonously similar, and yet there are variations within the general pattern. Such variety has already been pointed out as regards connecting links and qualifying terms. There is originality at times not only in structure but also in diction. Identical or slightly different variants in thought, as produced by geographical and time influences, manifest themselves in the following groups:

slick as an eel
sleek as an eel
slippery as an eel
fat as a Christmas turkey
full as a Christmas turkey
stuffed as a Christmas turkey

good as the fifth wheel on a wagon
useless as the fifth wheel on a wagon

prickly as a porcupine
hair like a porcupine
stiff as a porcupine's quills

bloody as a stabbed hog
bled like a stuck pig

close-mouthed as a clam
talkative as a clam

naked as a jay
naked as a picked jaybird

spreads like fire
spreads like wild fire

clings like bark to a tree
tight as the bark on a tree

IV

Certain suggestions have already been made with regard to the style and thought of folk similes. There remain, however, other problems which deserve more extensive attention than this paper gives or can give to them. Specifically, these problems are related to the antiquity, the geographical sources, and tone coloring of similes. Despite the fact that adequate treatment of these problems is now impossible; some study of them is not amiss, in consideration of certain data available at this time.

Some notion as regards the antiquity of some of these similes can be gained by recourse to literature itself. Such examination into the works of literary masters may prove nothing definite about the specific origin of any simile, but on the other hand may throw much light upon the evolution of language patterns and modes of thinking. References to the works of certain writers show that certain similes in this collection have existed for a long period. The following comparisons, as found in well-known works, indicate not only ancient but also reputable usage.

"... a monk, whan he is cloisterless
Is lykned til a fish that is waterless."

(Prologue, THE CANTERBURY TALES)

"His palfrey was as broun as is a berye."

(Monk's palfrey. Prologue, THE CANTERBURY TALES)

- "As lene was his hors as is a rake. . . ."
(Clerk's horse. Prologue, *THE CANTERBURY TALES*)
- "So pure an innocent, as that same lamb."
(*Faerie Queene*, Canto I, 15)
- "And well could file his tongue as smooth as glas."
(*Faerie Queene*, Canto I, 34)
- "No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door;"
(Mercutio, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Sc. 1)
- "And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine."
(Ghost to Hamlet, *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 5, 19-20)
- "Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow?"
(King, *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 3, 44-45)
- "His beard was as white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll."
(Ophelia's song, *Hamlet*, Act IV, Sc. 1, 192-193)
- "Drew audience and attention still as night."
(*Paradise Lost*, Bk. II, 308)
- "Fierce as ten furies, terrible as Hell."
(*Paradise Lost*, Bk. II, 671)
- "My love is like a red red rose. . . ."
(Under same title, Burns)
- "Red as a rose is she. . . ."
(*The Ancient Mariner*)
- "Her locks were yellow as gold. . . ."
(*The Ancient Mariner*)
- "And what is so rare as a day in June?"
(*The Vision of Sir Launfal*)

These quotations, some of which are several hundred years old, contain similes used exactly like those in the collection, namely:

like a fish out of water
brown as a berry
lean as a rake
innocent as a lamb
deep as a well
hair like a porcupine
white as snow
still as night
hot as hell
like a red, red rose
red as a rose
yellow as gold
rare as a day in June

s) The process of growth, change, and decay is well illustrated by the literary and folk parallels given above. Since growth and change are natural phenomena, the making of additional similes is taking place now and will continue, according to the conditions of this and future periods. This fact is well authenticated by the appearance of the following examples.

roar like an airplane
shakes like a bowl full of jello
difficult as a Chinese puzzle
fast as an airplane
rattles like a Ford
dauntless as an aviator
famed as a movie actor
glamorous as a movie star
figure like a guano sack tied in the middle
drives like a speed demon
rare as WPA sweat
complicated as a jig-saw puzzle
slow as Stepin Fetchit in slow motion
smart as Einstein
kicks dust like an automobile
famed as Lindberg
chin like Andy Gump
curved like Mae West
mouth like Martha Raye
high as the Empire State
shakes like a jitterbug

con- Perhaps all or most of these modern comparisons will disappear after they have served as a passing fad, being supplanted by others more appropriate to changed conditions. The fact remains, however, that they mark the advent of new thought as set forth in old patterns.

Turning now to the problem of geographical origins, one can find evidence of definite regional influences in the content of some of the similes. The following are apt illustrations of environmental conditions.

soft as cush (bread or crackers in meat soup, Southern U. S.)
flat as a Negro's foot (Southern U. S.)
shines like a nigger's heel (Southern U. S.)
passed like a bat out of Georgia (Southern U. S.)
high (or tall) as a Georgia pine (Southern U. S.)
scarce as Republicans in South Carolina (Southern U. S.)
dances like a negro (Southern U. S.)

Another problem is that of the tone coloring of these similes, especially as alliteration, rhyme, and assonance are concerned. In

regard to the usage of alliteration, it is apparent in many similes that the folk of this day hold on tenaciously to this old Germanic sound device. Repetition of initial sounds, although tiresome whenever overdone, always aids in stamping a pungent phrase upon the audience. It is effective in advertising as it is in everyday general usage. Many instances, like the following, have a dynamic effect upon the listener.

fit as a fiddle
finny as a fish
flat as a flitter (fritter)
flat as a flounder
wiggly as a wiggle-tail
cunning as a kitten
big as a balloon
crisp as a cracker
chirps like a cricket
balmy as a breeze
snapped like a jacksnapper
buck like a bronco
bashful as a country bumpkin
busy as a beaver
blind as a bat

The occurrence of rhyme and other assonant effects is not so pronounced as is that of alliteration. However, certain vowel combinations, especially when *e*, *i*, and *o* are blended with certain consonants, are quite pleasant. Somewhat in contrast with certain of the alliterated similes are those similes which have delicately refined tones. Coming in the wake of Norman and French traditions, these latter ones are often the essence of delightful sounds. At other times they are harsh and grating.

By way of illustrating the occasional rhyme schemes in similes, the following examples are cited.

snug as a bug in a rug
dumb as a dumb dora
true as blue
black as a stack of black cats
alien as a foreigner
hardy as barley
pully as taffy candy
shooting like popcorn popping

It appears that the most musical of the similes are those that have incomplete rhymes or no rhyme at all. Peculiar associations of

certain vowels with some of the consonants produce vivid tonal results. The examples given below are unusually sonorous.

soft as a lullaby
coo like a dove
free as a breeze
like a feather in the breeze
numerous as the leaves on the trees
gentle as a kitten
smooth as a kitten's ear
cool as a breeze

The interplay between the sounds of consonants and vowels in the following similes is not so pleasant as that in the group just above.

sissy as a city slicker
rolls like a ball
easy to lick as a dish
scarce as hens' teeth
hissed like twenty thousand kettles
proud as a dog in a doublet

Apropos of the discussion of sound effects, one unanswered question remains; that is, the reason for the high frequency of qualifying words that begin with the letters *c* and *s*. Does this frequency merely parallel the high frequency of all these words in the dictionary? Or, is it traceable to the happy combinations of these sibilants with other consonants and appropriately pleasant or agreeable vowels? Although there is no final answer, a positive answer to the latter question seems more correct.

The last unsolved problem is that of the relative frequency of the objects, abstractions, and animals which are associated with one another in these similes. In place of a complete analysis of my original collection which might prove to be the only reliable solution of the problem, a sampling has been done. This sample indicates the following frequency, in the order from the most frequent to the least frequent: (1) animals and their parts, in all species; (2) inanimate objects; (3) forces of natural world—geological, geographical, and astronomical; (4) plants; (5) abstractions. Further analysis may upset the relative order of frequency in one or all of the five categories.

*North Carolina State College of the
University of North Carolina.*

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THE OBSERVANCE OF SAINT JOSEPH'S DAY AMONG THE SICILIANS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

by Charles Speroni

Among the sundry customs brought to this country by Sicilians,¹ an important place belongs to the colorful and elaborate celebration of Saint Joseph, the patron saint of the poor and of orphans.² Preparations for the festivities of the day of "San Giuseppe", March 19, begin many weeks in advance. Everything must be ready by the eve of the preceding day, when scores, if not hundreds, of friends, neighbors, and curiosity seekers, go visiting the houses where "altars" have been prepared in honor of the saint.

Before describing these altars and the ceremony connected with them, a word must be said about the people who set them up. Contrary to the original custom in Sicily, where festivities are held mainly to help the poorest people of the community, here in Southern California, and probably in all other parts of the United States where Sicilians honor Saint Joseph,³ the altars are prepared in fulfillment of a promise made to the saint in a moment of need. For instance, a middle-aged Sicilian woman told me that about a year ago her

¹ For everything which pertains to Sicilian customs, superstitions, proverbs, etc., the reader is referred to Giuseppe Pitre's great work *Biblioteca delle tradizioni popolari siciliane*. Turin-Palermo, G. Clausen, Reber, 1878-1913. 25 vols. The celebration of St. Joseph in Sicily will be found in vol. XII "Spettacoli e Feste", pp. 230-247.—Cf. also G. Tamburello, "Feste popolari in Realmonte: III San Giuseppe", in *Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari italiane*, XVI (1897), pp. 412-13. And *Costumi, Musica, Danze e Feste Popolari Italiane*. Rome, Edizione O.N.D. (Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro), 1935, pp. 23-24.—Parallels to this Sicilian custom seem to be lacking in the European Continent.

² There appears to be little doubt that the association of St. Joseph with the poor, the widows, and the orphans goes back to a passage in the apocryphal *History of Joseph the Carpenter*, where Jesus Himself, who has finished describing the death of his foster-father, says: "O my father Joseph . . . Whosoever shall make an offering on the day of thy remembrance, him will I bless and recompense . . . and whosoever shall give food to the wretched, the poor, the widows, and orphans from the work of his hands, on the day on which thy memory shall be celebrated, and in thy name, shall not be in want of good things all the days of his life. . . . And every man who shall present an offering on the day of thy commemoration will I bless and recompense . . . for one I will render unto him thirty, sixty, and a hundred." (I used the translation available in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. VIII. New York, G. Scribner's Sons, 1908.)—I shall not go into details because it is not within the purpose of this brief article to trace to any extent the history of St. Joseph's cultus. For a concise discussion the reader is referred to Rev. Alban Butler, *The Lives of the Saints*. Now Edited, Revised, and Copiously Supplemented by H. Thurston and N. Leeson. Vol. III (March). New York, P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1932.

³ I have been informed that "altars" in honor of St. Joseph are prepared by the Sicilians of Milwaukee (Wisconsin). In New Orleans scores of them are set up yearly: see Lyle Saxon, *Fabulous New Orleans*. New York, Century, 1928, chap. XXXIII.

small son was taken very ill with pneumonia. Doctors had almost given up all hope of saving him when the mother prayed very fervently and asked Saint Joseph to help her child, promising that, in return, she would set up an altar in his honor. The boy soon recovered, and when the month of March arrived, his mother did not forget her promise to "San Gisippuzzu". Another woman made an altar because Saint Joseph healed her husband who had been severely hurt in an automobile accident. And in another family, thanks were thus rendered to the good carpenter for curing one of its members from cancer.⁴

These festive altars are usually set up on a large table in the living-room or in the dining-room of the house, and very frequently, especially if prepared by people of means, the table is so large that it occupies almost every square foot of the room. The altar is placed against the wall facing the entrance of the room, and is dominated by a large picture of the Holy Family: Mary, Joseph, and the Infant Jesus. If in the prayers other saints have been invoked besides Saint Joseph, their images—frequently statuettes—are placed at the foot of the altar. In some houses the altar is artistically decorated with beautiful lace-work, and the walls of the room are completely covered by rich and brightly-colored religious tapestries. Especially impressive are the scores and scores of choice edibles which make the table groan under their weight. With the exception of meat—Saint Joseph's day, it will be remembered, falls during Lent—everything imaginable can be found on those tables of plenty. All sorts of fruits, fresh and cooked vegetables, fish dishes decorated in various ways, rice, many kinds of cookies, cakes (some made or stuffed with figs), numberless loaves of bread of different shapes, wines, and the very characteristic roasted chick-peas, almonds, and horse-beans (they taste much better than the name might imply!). In addition, each table must always have a large square cake with "Saint Joseph" written on it. This cake is usually donated by a friend of the family. Another dish that must be on the table is a platter containing a large baked fish beautifully decorated. And then, a maze of flowers; on one table they even had an orchid. This year, since Saint Joseph's day fell just a few days before Easter, I noticed two new items on the table: a little lamb (made with bread-crumbs covered with beaten egg white and sprinkled with coconut), and one or more pots of green wheat symbolizing the resurrection of Christ.

⁴ For a few miracles performed by St. Joseph in answer to the prayers of the sick, see *Acta Sanctorum*. March, Vol. III (Paris-Rome, 1865), pp. 19-26.

At the end of the table facing the altar there are three or more places set for the three members of the Holy Family, and for as many saints as the hostess has decided to have. On the evening of the 18th, the priest visits the various houses where altars have been prepared, and blesses them. Once these tables have been blessed, no food can be touched or taken away from them until after the ceremony which takes place on the following day.

In the morning the children chosen to represent Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and the other saints, go to church to hear mass. Then, a few minutes before noon, either in their best clothes or, if possible, dressed to resemble the holy persons they represent, they walk to the third house from the one where an altar has been prepared. Saint Joseph knocks at the door and asks to be given shelter:

*Simu tri poviri pillirini
Simu stanchi di caminu
Vulimu 'nu pocu di risettu
E 'nu pocu di ristolu.*⁵

The people of the house have been warned beforehand, and they refuse admittance to the Holy Family:

*Chista casa nun è locanna
Itevinni a n'otra banna.*⁶

Then they proceed to the next house, and Saint Joseph asks Mary to knock:

*Tupuliati vui Maria,
Chi forsi vi dunano accansu.*⁷

But the lady of the second house answers with the same words of the lady of the first, and the "saints" continue to the third house, where Mary asks the Infant Jesus to knock:

*Tupuliati vui Gesù Bamminu.*⁸

When the child knocks he says:

*Simu Gesù, Maria, e Giuseppi.*⁹

and the woman of the house answers:

⁵ We are three poor pilgrims/ We are tired of walking
We want to rest a while/ And we want a little nourishment.
⁶ This house is not an inn/ Go elsewhere.
⁷ You knock, Mary, perhaps they will heed you.
⁸ You knock, Infant Jesus.
⁹ We are Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

*Site vui Giuseppi, e Maria,
Trasiti tutti in cumpagnia.*¹⁰

The ceremony is practically the same in every house; the words accompanying the ceremony, however, are frequently very different. There probably are as many versions of it as there are localities in Sicily where Saint Joseph's day is commemorated. Just to mention another version of the brief ceremony, Saint Joseph goes to the first door and knocks with his symbolic rod. When the door is opened, he says:

*C'è locu pu alluggiari tri poviri pillerini?*¹¹

And the lady says:

*Nun c'è locu pu vui oggi.*¹²

Then Saint Joseph says:

*Madunnuzza c'avimu a fari?*¹³

And Mary answers:

*Comu vori Gesù.*¹⁴

At the second door the exact thing is repeated. At the third, the hostess says:

*C'è locu pu Gesù, Giuseppi, e Maria
Chista nun è cchiù a casa mia,
È di Gesù, Giuseppi, e Maria.*¹⁵

Once the Holy Family is within, the master of the house takes from the table some blessed wine and with it washes the right hand of the children representing Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Then they are seated at the table, and the people who have come to the ceremony and who are very devout Catholics, kiss the right hand of these "saints." Sometimes they also touch their right foot and then kiss their own hand which has thus become blessed. The washing of the hand and the touching of the foot are not always carried out.

After the "saints" are seated, each one of them is served by an appointed person who sees to it that the saint upon whom he is

¹⁰ It is you, Joseph, and Mary,/ Come in, all of you.

¹¹ Is there room to shelter three poor pilgrims?

¹² There is no room for you today.

¹³ Mary dear, what shall we do?

¹⁴ What Jesus wishes.

¹⁵ There is room for Jesus, Joseph, and Mary,
This is no longer my house,
It is that of Jesus, Joseph, and Mary.

waiting is not served the same food twice. In some families just the host and the hostess wait on the "saints". Everything is served to them on a clean dish. I was told that they must have three mouthfuls of all they are offered. The first course always consists of an artistically decorated orange: something like an orange salad. This is followed by variously prepared fish, fennels, artichokes, sardines, rice, *pasta ca' muddica* (spaghetti with sauce made of bread-crumbs, celery, and grated cheese), fruit, etc., etc. After about three hours, when the "saints" have finished eating, they are given, to take home, a basketful of the food that is left on the table. Then the food is at the disposal of all visitors who are offered also a dish of spaghetti seasoned with *muddica*. One woman informed me that during the afternoon and evening of Saint Joseph's day she served no less than ninety pounds of spaghetti!

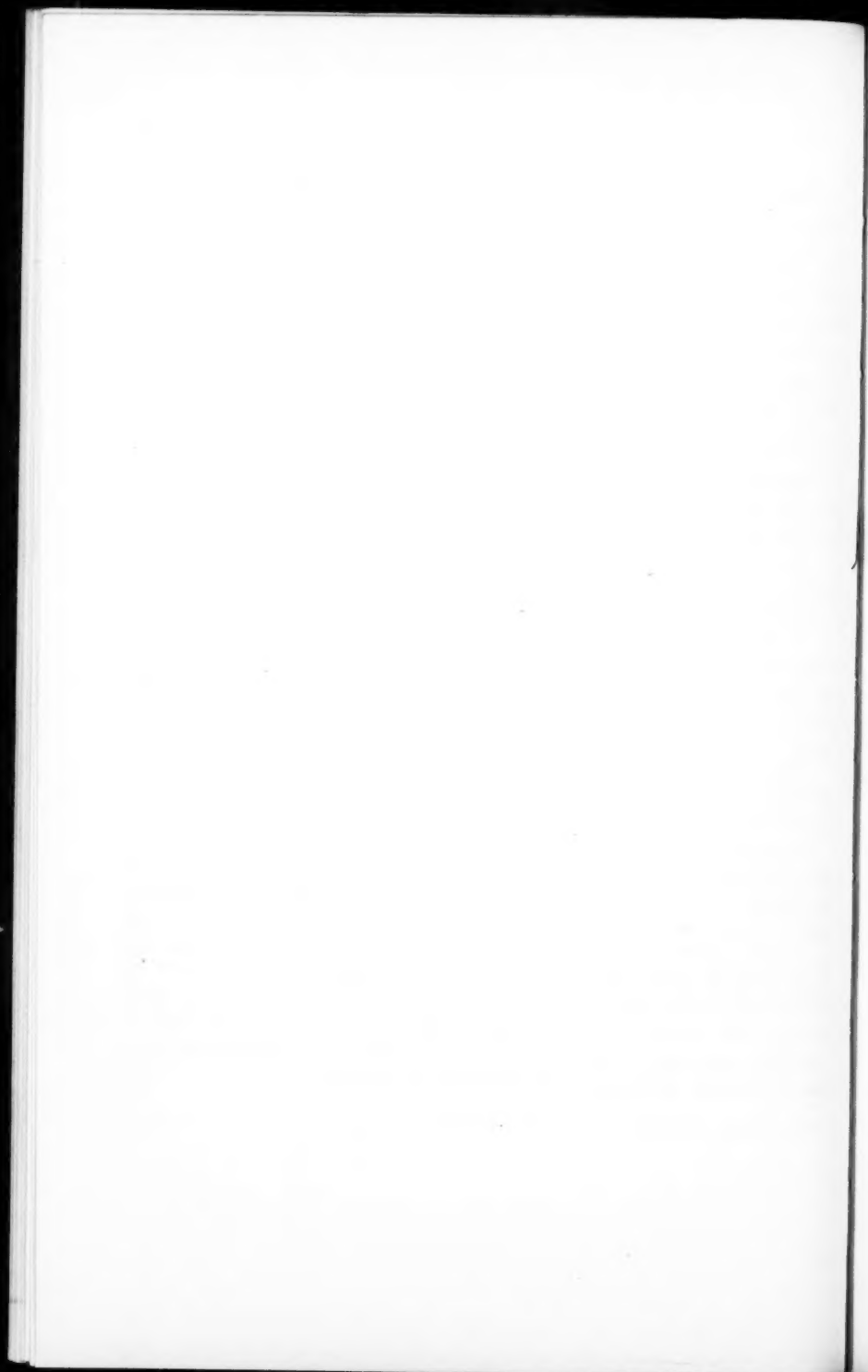
On the following morning, whatever food remains must be distributed among friends or preferably among the poor people of the neighborhood.

I asked several women whether in Sicily they prepared such elaborate and costly tables, and they invariably told me that, because of the much lower standard of living, what they or their parents used to do there hardly compares with what they can afford to do here.

The same family does not necessarily set up an altar just once; it depends entirely on the promise made to Saint Joseph. In one family they have been making altars for over twenty years.

Judging by the humble dwellings inhabited by most of the families devoted to Jesus' foster-father, it must be quite burdensome for them to prepare such sumptuous tables. Many of the poorer people must start saving months ahead of time, and do away with many so-called luxuries of the present age. It is true, however, that friends and neighbors who have addressed their prayers to Saint Joseph are allowed to contribute to the decoration of the table either with money, or, more often, with cakes, candles, and flowers, and this certainly helps to bear the expenses encountered by the more indigent worshipers of the good carpenter.

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THE CONCHS OF RIVIERA, FLORIDA¹

by Veronica Huss and Evelyn Werner

Ten minutes from the spacious estates of West Palm Beach is the bare poverty of Riviera, with its frame shacks, its fish houses, its wharves, boat sheds, and net racks. The majority of the 811 people living there are known as "Conchs". They, like the Conchs of the Florida Keys, emigrated from the Bahama Islands. Of the different versions accounting for the origin of the name Conch, the most commonly accepted one is that, when these people first landed in the Bahamas, their diet was principally the meat of the conch, a large, univalvular shellfish. The name is now generally applied to all natives of the Bahamas, both white and negro. Of Anglo-Saxon stock, the white Bahaman settlers were immigrants from the British Isles, principally England. Although the majority are Anglo-Saxon in appearance, with fair hair and blue eyes, some of them evidence other racial characteristics.

The Conch people live among white Americans in Riviera, but the adult Conchs are almost completely segregated as far as social relations are concerned, because of the prejudice of their white neighbors. Many white American parents have refused to allow their children to attend the Riviera school, where the Conchs predominate. This prejudice on the part of the Americans permits the Conchs to be neither white nor colored; and they are, therefore, forced into an unasked-for isolation.

The dialect of the Riviera Conch is somewhat confusing, because of an inconsistency in pronunciation and general word usage. This becomes evident when he combines Southern English with his Bahaman English. He drops *h*'s when they are required and applies them before words which begin with a vowel. The addition of a Southern drawl moderates the Conch's tone of voice and slows his speech, so that not only is it easy to understand him, but his words may be recorded verbatim by the interviewer. However, when he is excited or angry, he reverts to the rapid, clipped enunciation of the English, and it is not only difficult to understand, but impossible to record.

Perhaps the most perplexing element of Conch dialect is the substitution of *v*'s for *w*'s and vice versa. For example, *we* is pronounced *ve*, *vessel* becomes *wessel*, *want* is *vant*, and *one* is *vun*.

¹ The material for this article was collected and compiled by workers of the Florida Writers' Project, Work Projects Administration.

These substitutions are used regularly by some Conchs, although they vary the usage from one sentence to the next; others use them only part of the time.

At first it seemed certain that these *v* and *w* changes were derived from Dutch and German ancestors, but all the information obtained on the subject indicated that the Conchs were of English and English-negro blood. *Folk Culture on St. Helena Island*² points out that the *v* and *w* changes are of old English origin and are common to natives of the Bahama Islands.

Careful observation brought out the fact that the *v* and *w* changes are used more consistently among those of a pure English strain, than among those who have a mixture of negro and white blood. The dialect in the songs and stories has been recorded verbatim.

It is not uncommon for neighborhood groups to gather in a backyard beneath the mango trees and punctuate the discussion of their problems with stories, poems and riddles, which are never related twice in the same way. In all probability these variations are the main reason for their survival throughout the years. Although some of the songs, like the narratives, contain the jollity of the old English sailor and the natural wit of the negro, the Conch is not a very humorous story teller, though he thinks himself so. Many of the stories are pointless, but the teller will laugh heartily after relating them.

Wilbur Roberts, the source of the collection of stories, riddles, songs and poems, is eighty-four years old and blind. He was born in the Bahamas and came to the United States in 1915. The following story has more sly humor than most of the ones he told:

"Once there was a feller 'ad a squint eye, and one day I asked 'im 'ow come it vas dat vay and 'e tole me 'e vas out walkin' one day, jest walkin' along leisure like, acrost the island where 'e live, when 'e chanct on a bean stalk like what Jack of the Bean Stalk used. Bein' curious 'e looked it over and tried to see to the top of it, but when 'e looked up, it was so 'igh it disappeared in the clouds and 'e couldn't see the top.

"After a while, 'e got curiouser and wanted to see 'ow far up it went, so 'e started to climbin'. The further 'e climbed the further 'e wanted to go, and still 'e didn't reach the top. Then all of a sudden it come to an end and 'e found the top all withered and dried. 'E also discovered that 'e could crawl out on solid ground, so 'e crawled off the bean stalk and set down to rest. After 'e 'ad been settin' there fer a spell, 'e seen some wimmin over in a distance, so 'e reckoned 'e'd git up and go see who they vas and what they was

² Johnson, Guy, *Folk Culture on St. Helena Island*, S. C., University of North Carolina Press, 1930.

do in'. When 'e walked over and told them 'ow 'e chanced there and who 'e was, they told 'im that 'e 'ad crawled into the first 'eaven and that they were wergins what lived there. They also told 'im they was employed making garments for all the other folks in 'eaven, and as they talked they was cuttin' out materials and sewin'.

"Finally, after a bit, me friend claim 'e got scared up there among all them wimmin and 'e reckoned 'e'd better be gittin' hisself out and back to where 'e come from. So 'e went back to the edge of the 'eaven and to the place from where 'e come in, but when 'e got there 'e found that the bean stalk 'ad withered and fallen down, and 'e was stranded. 'E went back and told the wergins all 'is troubles, but they was good and offered to 'elp 'im. So they took some of their materials and tore it up, then they platted 'im a rope so thet 'e could be lowered to the earth. Then 'e bid them good-bye after thankin' them fer their trouble and went over the side and begin 'is comin' down. 'E lowered 'isself until all but thirty feet of the ground, and the rope give out. I mean it warn't long enough. So then 'e didn't know what to do agin. 'E dangled there fer a piece, tryin' to think what 'e wanted to do. 'E couldn't figure out whether 'e wanted to drop 'ead first or feet first. 'E didn't wanta drop feet first because 'e was afeered thet they'd be sheved up in 'im, and 'e was afeered to go 'ead first because 'e'd bash 'is 'ead in, but at last 'e decided thet hit would be better fer 'im to go 'ead first and 'e did. 'E landed in the sand plum up to 'is waist. 'E wiggled tryin' to git 'isself loose, but it didn't do no good, cause 'e couldn't budge. So after a bit, 'e walked to a nearby farm and got 'isself a grubbin' 'oe and comin' back dug 'isself out. And in diggin' 'isself hout, 'e stuck a corner of the 'oe in 'is eye, and caused 'im to be squint-eyed."

The following tale was taken down from the narrative of "Uncle" Wilbur Roberts of Riviera, Florida:

"Once there was a neighbor of our'n who owned a pet parrot. 'E 'ad caught it when it was a baby, tamed it, and at the same time teched it to talk. After it got plumb growed, he useter leave it on 'is front porch, and it stayed up in the rafters.

"Now in the Bahaymees we 'ad wood-men, and they was men what peddle wood from door to door, and they'd come by 'most every day, callin' their wood and bringin' it along in little carts pulled by donkeys. Well, twicet in one week the wood man come by this 'ere neighbor of ourn and called out 'is wares. Both times 'e come by, someone in me neighbor's 'ouse called out fer 'im to leave wood. So 'e drove around back of the 'ouse and dumped 'is load by the dung pile.

"At the end of the week 'e come by agin to collect 'is money from the man of the 'ouse. So goin' up to the door, 'e told 'im about it and when 'e did, the man claim 'e only ordered one load. Well, the wood-man told 'im 'e ordered two, and the man claim 'e didn't. So first thing you knowed, they was arguin' turrible. Then me neigh-

bor's wife come hout, and she stuck up fer 'er 'usband. So nobody jest didn't git nowhere. Finally they ended by tellin' the wood-man thet bein' they only ordered one load of wood, they didn't intend to pay 'im fer no more.

"About thet time, the parrot settin' up in the rafters listenin' to it all, calls down, 'it was me what ordered thet second load'. Well, 'is master was so mad, 'e jest ketch thet bird by the tail feathers, dragged 'im down, wrung 'is neck and kicked 'im into the yard to die.

"'E lay there fer a long time, most too dead to git hup agin, but towards sundown 'e revive, so gittin' up enough courage 'e walked around to the backyard. 'Ere 'e found a cat lyin' dead on the dung 'ill, so walkin' up to 'im, 'e said, 'Well, they wrung me neck, kicked me and kilt me fer orderin' a load of wood. Now what did they kill you fer?' And 'e crawled up beside the cat to die."

This tale was also related by "Uncle" Wilbur Roberts of Riviera, Florida, to the Florida Writers' Project worker.

"Men in the islands in my day, was honest. They warn't like they are 'ere in the United States, and try to cheat you outten your very eyes.

"You see, 'ow I know, is like this. When we was all to-home in the Bahaymees, and I was a very young lad, we had to depend on shipwrecks off the coast, and in the passes, fer a lot of things we couldn't git no other way. Many is the time we waked in the mornin' to find as many as three vessels wrecked off our shore. Whenever this 'appened, all the men in the community was given 'is chance to git as much as the next one, and nobody was left out of the salvage work.

"In them days Spanish doubloons was plentiful and worth sixteen dollars apiece. Well, 'most every ship what come our way in them days 'ad plenty, so we'd git them along with the cargo. And every man got 'is share, as all shares was divided even. And if hit come out that there was twenty men, and only nineteen pieces of gold, them nineteen pieces was laid aside until another wreck when the twenty was added, and then each man got 'is doubloon.

"We always 'ad a leader, a captain, what led us on them salvage jobs, and thet way everything was kept straight."

"Uncle" Wilbur has a large stock of tales about life in the Bahamas. His nine-year-old, American-born granddaughter is usually an eager listener, and many of the adult villagers enjoy his reminiscences. Here is one about fires and tinder horns that he told to the Florida Writers' Project worker.

"Ephiriam Malone, me great grandpa on me mother's side was from Ireland; 'e was a good old man. 'E come to the Bahaymees way back and 'e was known as the 'keeper of the fires'. 'E kept fires on 'and and like any store keeper would keep any goods. 'E sold it

to 'is fellow islanders, when theirs give out. 'E made 'is living thet way.

"But back yonder when matches warn't even knowed of, we useter keep what we called 'tinder 'orns'. I kin remember them very well, because me folks always 'ad one. They was made from a cow 'orn and 'ad a cork in the top. The tinder was made from clean white rags burned almost to adh [ash], but not quite. The tinder was then kept in the 'orn and corked tight to keep everything out, especially the damp.

"Of course we was awful kerful about not lettin' the fires go out if we could 'elp it, because they're so 'ard to git started agin. But when they did go out, we used the tinder 'orn to start another. In startin' them, we'd git down on our knees, take the 'orn tight between them, then we'd uncork it and strike sparks from flint and steel inside thet tinder. It soon blazed up and we could 'ave warmth agin. We always watched thet little 'orn more than we did anything else. Heven more than food sometimes, for if anything 'appened to it, the results was sometimes very bad. Especially durin' storms it was watched, and kept dry, fer if it weren't, or should get wet or lost, there weren't no tellin' when we'd 'ave fire agin. If any of these things 'appened it meant someone would 'ave to travel to another island in search of fire. Sometime, when it couldn't be 'ad clost by, they'd 'ave to travel several 'undred miles fer jest a little bit of it.

"Believe me them days was ones to be afeered of, and we sure was, too. Them storms always was awful, and they 'most always got everything we 'ad, so we useter try and keep fire, heven if we couldn't keep nothin' else."

CONCH SONGS

There are stories behind a number of the songs sung by the Riviera Conchs:

Black-em-Boogey, sikkity-lendy,
Kickity-book, backity-oo
That's yor name daddy?
Oh! That's not yor name daddy.

This song, communicated by Mrs. Mary Jane Roberts of Riviera, Florida, concerns a man who had been born in the Bahama Islands and lived all his life without telling his name. Even when he grew up and married and had children, not even they knew what his name was. So every day when he went to the well to draw water he would look at his reflection in the well; and when he saw it, he would sing the first two lines of the song, and his children, who were always trying to catch up with him, would stand behind and sing the last two.

The following song is sung to the tune of "Yankee Doodle". It was communicated by Mrs. Naomi Nelson, Mrs. Roberts' daughter, of Riviera, Florida:

Aunt Jemima climb a tree
They tuk a stick to bruise 'er,
But there she stood a-throwin' corn
An' callin' a bob-tailed rooster.

Conch grandmothers ride babies on their knees and sing this song. Mrs. Nelson learned it from her mother.

Trotty-horse, trotty-horse, trotted to town;
Take care baby and don't fall down.

The old English 'Froggy Would A-Wooing Go' appears in Conch guise. Mrs. Roberts sang it thus:

The Froggy would a-wooin' go,
Umh-huh, umh-huh,
The Froggy would a-wooin' go,
Whether 'is Mama would let 'im or no,
Umh-huh, umh-huh.

'E vent hup to Miss Mousie's den
Umh-huh, umh-huh,
'E vent hup to Miss Mousie's den,
And said Miss Mousie can Hi come hin?
Umh-huh, umh-huh.

Yes sir fine Froggy I sit to spin
Umh-huh, umh-huh,
Yes sir fine Froggy I sit to spin
Yes Mr. Froggy you may come hin
Umh-huh, umh-huh.

'E said, "My dear, Hi've come to see you"
Umh-huh, umh-huh,
'E said, "My dear, Hi've come to see you,
Miss Mousie vill you marry me?"
Umh-huh, umh-huh.

Uncle rat has gone to town
Umh-huh, umh-huh,
Uncle rat has gone to town
To buy 'is niece a veddin' gown
Umh-huh, umh-huh.

Oh! Where shall the veddin'-breakfast be?
 Umh-huh, umh-huh,
 Oh! Where shall the veddin'-breakfast be?
 Vay hout yonder in the 'oller tree
 Umh-huh, umh-huh.

First came hin vas a little green frog,
 Umh-huh, umh-huh,
 First came hin vas a little green frog
 'Oppin' aroun' from log to log
 Umh-huh, umh-huh.

Next came hin vas a rattlesnake,
 Umh-huh, umh-huh,
 Next came hin vas a rattlesnake
 Passin' aroun' the veddin' cake
 Umh-huh, umh-huh.

Then the Frog an' the Mouse jumped on the shelf
 Umh-huh, umh-huh,
 Then the Frog an' the Mouse jumped on the shelf
 An' if you wanta hear more
 Jest sing it yor se'f.

Another song, called *Birdie, Birdie*, was communicated by Mrs. Roberts. The first part tells of a child talking to his mother about the birds on a limb outside the window. The child thinks the birds are real, but they have been made of snow and placed there by the child's father. In the last part of the song the child addresses a real bird which he sees on the garden walk, and which he thinks is the snow bird's mother:

Birdie, birdie, in the tree
 See them Mama, vun, two, three,
 See they spread their little wings,
 Oh! What darlin' pretty things!
 Snow white darlin's look aroun',
 See yor breakfast on the groun'?
 Mama dear, see 'ow still they keep?
 Do you think they are asleep?
 Do they know that it is day?
 They vould wake and fly away.
 Mama on the garden walk
 Smile to 'ear a-childrun talk,

Shake the limb, down birdie go,
Papa made them out of snow.

The next song is sung by children trying to catch a bat. The version here recorded was taken down from the singing of Bernice Nelson, Mrs. Roberts' granddaughter, of Riviera, Florida.

Bat, bat, come under my hat
I'll give you a slice of bacon;
I'll make you a cake
Next time I bake
If I am not mistaken.

The following song, *The Old Fox*, was sung by "Uncle" Wilbur Roberts of Riviera, Florida.

There vas an old fox
Who lived in the rocks
'Is cave vas lonely and dark.

Vun night 'e come hout
And prowled hall habout
As 'ungry has a shark.

'E thought 'e vould creep
Where the fowls vere hasleep
Hin a barn so snug and varm;

Said 'e, "Hi must eat,
Hand chickens are sveet
There's ha-plenty on this farm."

'E looked hall aroun'
An' 'eard not a sound
An' slowly, steadily crept.

The ole Tallow³ flew aroun'
An' scratched hat the groun'
An' growled, "Bow-wow, bow-wow".

'E quickly sprang then
On a fine young 'en
An' thought hit vas time to run,

As Tallow made now
A turrible row
An' the farmer brought 'is gun.

³ Tallow was the dog.

Han' a chase they hall gave
But safe in 'is cave
'E jumped as 'e reached the brow.

Hand old Tallow flew aroun'
Hand scratched hat the groun'
An' growled 'is bow-wow, bow-wow.

'Ere lay the fox
In 'is cave in the rocks
So faint and moaned with pain.

'E made a wow
That arter thet row
'E'd never steal agin.

The following well-known child's song is illustrated with hand motions as it is sung:

This is my mother's knives and forks;
Here's my mother's table;
Here's my sister's looking glass;
And here's the baby's cradle.

HYMNS OF THE CONCHS

There are two churches in Riviera; the small Gospel Hall has no regular pastor and few converts, but the larger Holiness, or "Holy Roller," Church is attended by the majority of adult Conchs in Riviera and by many of the younger people. At the present time, the Episcopal Church is endeavoring to establish a mission and return the Conchs to their native church, the Church of England. Most of the Conch religious songs were learned in the home, and they are sung at work or at social gatherings more often than at church. This one was recorded while Mrs. Naomi Harding sang it at her home.

In my soul
In my soul
There's a great revival.
Teach me how to watch and pray
And to read the Bible.

The following temperance song was taken down from the singing of Mrs. Roberts of Riviera, Florida. Called a "motto song," it is one which the good temperance people used to sing in the Bahamas.

I 'eard a sveet robin, vun mornin' in May
Who sang in the happle tree, hover the vay.

What she vas singin' so sweetly about?
 Hi listened a long time, but Hi couldn't find hout.

"Hi'm sure," she replied, "you cannot get wrong,
 'Cause you know Hi'm singin' a temperance song.

"Cold-water, cold-water, cold-water
 Yes, thet his my song;
 Fer Hi love to be a-singin' hit
 The whole day long."

The following religious acrostic song, known as the *A. B. C. Song*, is popular among the Conch people. This version was taken down from the singing of "Uncle" Wilbur Roberts of Riviera, Florida.

A is fer Adam, who vas the first man;
 B is fer Bay-lim, who mischief did plan;
 C is fer Cain, 'is brother did kill;
 D is fer Daniel, who done the Lord's will;
 E is fer Elisha, the raven did feed;
 F is fer Felix, whose scorn take 'eed;
 G is fer Goliath, whom David did slay;
 H is fer Hamon, whom God did repay;
 I is fer Isaac, the dutiful son;
 J is fer Jonah, from duty did run;
 K is fer Korah, whom sin did fall;
 L is fer Lydia, who listen to Paul;
 M is fer Mary, Christ's vork she did mark;
 N is fer Noah, whom built the great ark;
 O is fer Obediah, the Lord's prophet fed;
 P is fer Peter, whom many tears shed;
 Q is fer queen, came wisdom to find;
 R is fer Ruth, a daughter so kind;
 S is fer Stephen, who suffered and knew;
 T is fer Timothy, from the truth 'e withdrew;
 U is fer Uriah, the king conducts 'e;
 V is fer vine, a branch I may be;
 W is fer widow, how freely she gave;
 X is fer cross, Christ died, men to save;
 Y is fer youth, 'e slept while Paul preached;
 Z is fer Zekias, who up the tree crept.

The following work song was communicated by Mr. Roberts of Riviera, Florida.

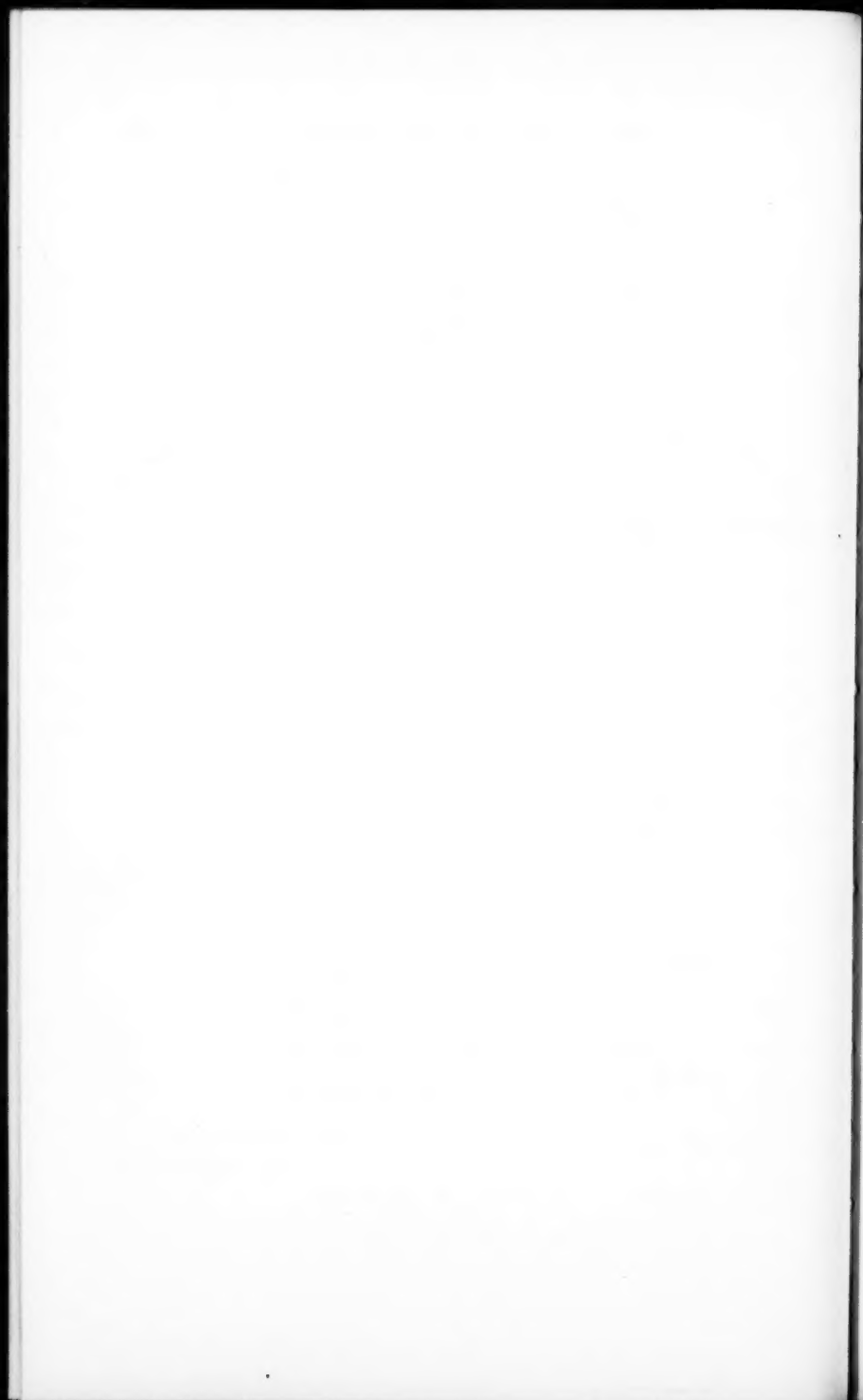
Drive the nail aright, bys [boys];
 'It it on the 'ead;
 Strike vit all yer might, bys,
 While the hiron his red.

When you've vork to do, bys,
Do hit vith a vill;
There you reach a top, bys,
First must climb the 'ill.

Standin' hat the foot, bys,
Gazin' hat the sky,
'Ow can you git hup, bys,
If you never try?

Though you stumble hoff, bys,
Never be downcast;
Try and try again, bys,
You'll succeed at last.

Jacksonville, Florida.



NANIGO IN FLORIDA

by Stetson Kennedy

Los Criminales de Cuba, published in Havana in 1882 by Trujillo Monaga, contains some historical data relative to the Nanigo cult, as well as an outline of its activities in Cuba at that time.

A Cuban resident of Ybor City (Tampa), Florida, gave the following information about Nanigo: "*Naniguismo* is not a product of Cuba or the Cubans. It is a Negro secret society that had its origins in the lower Congo and other parts of Africa, and was imported to Cuba with the African slaves. Among the gods of the society are *Ecue*, son of *Abasi*: supreme being; *Chango*, the spirit of good and evil, possessing the power of punishment; *Yemaya*, a spirit inhabiting the air; *Negues*, genius of evil; and *Nanga*, supreme spirit of evil.

"The terrible germ of Nanigo budded in Cuba. The society sometimes sacrificed children to their gods, and on numerous occasions newly-born white babies were stolen, their hearts were cut out and used to prepare a broth that was fed to sick Nanigos.

"The Nanigos sought to demonstrate their manliness by boastfulness and courage—a gross error made by an inferior race that could not cope with the civilization of a superior people. As a consequence a great deal of friction and violence developed between the Nanigos and the whites in Cuba.

"But with the increase of culture the 'clubs' of Nanigo were not able to carry on as in the Colonial period. Finally, under the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado, Nanigo was outlawed in Cuba, and its activities declared illegal. Yet Nanigo continues to exist in the rural districts."

A Cuban living in Key West, Florida, contributed this information about the naming of Nanigo: "Its real name, when brought by the African slaves to Cuba, was *Carabali Apapa Abacua*. The first word means the place they came from, the second is something old and great to them, and the third means 'pledge'. The ritual was taken up by the whites, and named 'Nanigo' by them."

Another Key West Cuban, who was initiated into Nanigo in Cuba, gave the following description of the street dance and initiation ritual: "Nanigo is a secret fraternal order for men only, although occasionally a very old widow is admitted. Only the most fearless and virile of men are initiated; they are not allowed to take slights or insults from anyone, except for a brother Nanigo. The various

groups are competitive and unrelated. Members cooperate closely within their own group, aiding each other whenever possible, especially during sickness, etc. Feuds often spring up when a member of one group harms a member of another.

"In the initiation street dance, three *diablos* (devils) precede the procession, sweeping the way clear for the initiates with short-handled straw brooms. All of the Nanigos wear capes over their heads, but *Ijamba*, the head man, wears a special cape with a second vestigial cap constructed at the nape of the neck, symbolic of his head position. His cape and coat extend below the waist; his trousers are made of red and black squares. Feathers encircle his wrists and ankles, and he dances barefoot.

"One dancer carries a heavy stick with which he ferociously flays the air, warding off evil spirits. Occasionally he goes berserk, striking onlookers—this signifies that someone has ridiculed the ceremony, or that something else has gone wrong.

"Another dancer leads a goat by a rope, another carries a rooster, another a porcupine in a cage, and another has a snake entwined about his arms.

"The initiation takes place at a river or stream, where the candidates are led into the water, waist deep. The dancer with the stick strikes the goat between the horns, stunning it, then pierces the goat's throat with a knife. The candidates drink of the goat's blood, and a dance is performed on the banks.

"An 'X' is marked with yellow chalk across the candidates' chests and heads, and the assemblage proceeds to a nearby house. There a chalk circle is made on the floor, within which the candidates kneel. A ritual is performed, with incantations spoken in the *palabras del Nanigo* (words of Nanigo), a combination of African dialects and Spanish.

"When a member of a Nanigo group is to be expelled or murdered for revealing secrets, a symbolic ritual burial is held in advance to signify their 'death from Nanigo'."

Murders by Nanigos were mysteriously performed during the course of a street dance. Needless to say, the dances created a certain amount of apprehension wherever they occurred. It is also said that Cuban nationalists joined the cult, finding the secretiveness of its meetings well-adapted to planning revolutionary activities against the Spanish authorities.

Nanigo came to Florida for various reasons. There were naturally some Nanigos among the Cubans who immigrated first to Key

West and later to Tampa, seeking employment in the cigar factories and other industries. Others were revolutionary patriots seeking refuge from the tyranny of Spain. And several of the "notorious Nanigos" named in Monaga's book, wanted in connection with Nanigo killings in Cuba, fled from the Cuban authorities and became well-known residents of Key West and Tampa.

A Nanigo group was organized in Key West, and enjoyed its greatest popularity between 1880 and 1890. They gave street dances from time to time, and dance-parties on New Year's. As it had no rival, the Nanigo group in Key West was rightly considered to be a harmless fraternal and social organization. However, a Cuban resident was murdered during one of the street dances, and the belief is general in Key West that it was an act of the Nanigos. Though the police took no action at the time, Nanigo in Key West declined rapidly in prestige. In 1923 the last Nanigo street dance to be held in Key West was performed "for fun" by Cuban young people, attired in make-shift costumes.

Leader of the Nanigos in Key West was a man named Ganda, a small "tough" Cuban mulatto. After his group disbanded, he often danced for the entertainment of sailors, charging the nominal sum of one dime. He is reputed to have been an excellent dancer, in spite of his great age.

Ganda conceived the idea of making elaborate Nanigo costumes, head-dresses, *bongós* (drums), and other equipment, teaching young Cubans in Key West the Nanigo dances, and then joining his company with a carnival of some sort. Over a period of years he saved his money, and eventually spent several hundred dollars buying fine goat skins and wine casks from Cuba to fashion his *bongós*. He finished the costumes and other equipment, but died in 1922 before he could put his plan into operation. His entire equipment is said to be intact, in the possession of his daughter in Tampa.

In the "Sociological Survey of Ybor City" compiled by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, there appears this fragmentary mention of Nanigo in Tampa: "Nanigo rites were recently enacted in West Tampa. To the accompaniment of a *bongó*, a *diablo* appeared in a dress suit of black and white, adorned with feathers. A savage-looking knife dangled from one side of his belt, while on the other side hung a live rooster, fastened by the legs. His lively contortions followed the primitive rhythms of the *bongó*."

Recent folklore recording expeditions conducted by the Florida Work Projects Administration for the Library of Congress located

a number of people in Key West and Tampa, besides those already mentioned, who undoubtedly have an initiate's knowledge of Nanigo, obtained both in Cuba and locally. Because of the increasing laxity of Nanigo in Florida, these members are no longer reluctant about revealing the "secrets" of the group. They have little or no fear of physical or metaphysical punishment by other Nanigos. But because of their extreme poverty, they refuse absolutely to perform without some pecuniary remuneration—which unfortunately was unavailable to the WPA expeditions.

But provided the very modest funds required to inspire the co-operation of a group, there is no apparent reason why the complete Nanigo ceremonials—street dances, initiations, rituals, sacrifices, incantations, and altar ceremonies—could not be recorded on phonograph records and color motion film. In this way a complete record could be obtained of Nanigo, the most elaborate and colorful of the Afro-Cuban voodoo cults to be introduced to this country. The opportunity is obviously brief.

Jacksonville, Florida.

Readers will be glad to know that the articles appearing in
SOUTHERN FOLKLORE QUARTERLY
will hereafter be indexed in the
International Index to Periodicals

THE FARMER'S CURST WIFE (CHILD 278) IN MICHIGAN

by E. C. Beck

To him who has not listened to the lumberjacks in the American northwoods it may be surprising the number of English and Scottish ballads these rough-and-ready shanty-boys know. The number of times I have heard *Barbara Allen* and *Young Charlotte* are legion. From old Camp Sixteen near Saginaw to Munising in the Upper Peninsula I have heard these ballads with or without accompaniment. "Grandpa" Titus of Cadillac, Michigan, used to sing about

Young Johnny, the logger, went courting of late
Went courting a farmer's fair daughter called Kate.

One of the most interesting lumberwoods versions of old British balladry is Child 278. I have heard it in the Tennessee hills and have picked up an excellent version in the Missouri Ozarks. The version sung by Thomas Webster, grizzled lumberjack from Au Gres, Michigan, compares well with either:

The old devil he came to a woodsman one day.
Said he, "One of your family I would take away."
Ti rum ti diddle dum dido

"Oh," said the woodsman, "I'm all undone.
For I hate to lose my oldest son."
Ti rum ti diddle dum dido

"It's not your oldest son I crave,
But your scolding wife I'm bound to have."
Ti rum ti diddle dum dido

"Oh, take her and welcome with all my heart.
I hope you two never more will part."
Ti rum ti diddle dum dido

The devil he took her upon his back
And off to hell went clickty clack.
Ti rum ti diddle dum dido

One little devil cried out in his pains;
She picked up a club and knocked out his brains.
Ti rum ti diddle dum dido

Another little devil climbed up on the wall
Saying, "Take her back, Daddy; she'll murder us all."
Ti rum ti diddle dum dido

Another little devil jumped into the well
Saying, "Take her away, Dad; she'll ruin all hell."
Ti rum ti diddle dum dido

So the devil he roped her up in a sack
And off to the woodsman he hurried her back.
Ti rum ti diddle dum dido

The woodsman he laughed, for it tickled him well
For to think that his wife was the bully of hell.
Ti rum ti diddle dum dido

Central State Teachers' College of Illinois.

A FOOTNOTE TO EDWARD, EDWARD

by Bertrand H. Bronson

Dare one ask those who believe Percy's version of *Edward* to be the natural product of unsophisticated folk composition whether they have fully considered the implications of their position?

So far as I am aware, no one is disposed to quarrel with Professor W. M. Hart's admirably lucid analysis of the elements of the ballads, which he has ranked according to the degree of their narrative complexity.¹ Except, perhaps, in the heroic ballads, most examples of which are Danish, he finds greatest attention to the element of character in the *Gest*, where the hero displays qualities of humor, loyalty, piety, rudimentary notions of social justice and class consciousness, besides the more physical attributes of hardihood, bravery, and so on. The simpler stages of balladry, in due proportion, are shown to lack this elaboration of character. Thus we learn that in the Robin Hood cycle "description of States of Mind is still an 'undeveloped element'";² that the border heroes "rise to the dignity of a type, embody popular ideals";³ that in the Simple Ballads, the hero is a "mere doer of deeds, . . . nothing more".⁴ Of this least complex class of ballads, where there is no emphasis on character, and where the focus of interest lies entirely in event or situation, *Edward* has been cited as an outstanding example.

The superiority of *Edward*—I speak only of Percy's version—is chiefly due to its surprise ending, which delays the climax to the very end, administering the shock of horrible revelation when the hearer believes he already knows all the essential facts in the story, so that he must reconstruct his attitude to everything that has preceded. Without this ending, the climax occurs in the middle of the ballad, and the *dénouement* is inartistically protracted. The violence of the re-adjustment which the ending forces upon us has possibly hindered our drawing certain necessary inferences relating to the conduct of the narrative and to the character of the persons involved in the ballad.

It is obvious that the whole dialogue, in the light of the final implication of the mother in her son's guilt, is converted into an intellectual fencing-bout. The mother already knows everything. Her son knows she knows. Why, then, does she ask her questions? Why

¹ W. M. Hart, *Ballad and Epic*, Boston, 1907.

² *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

does he postpone admission of the truth by lies and evasions? To answer these questions plausibly, from the point of view of character, is to construct psychological portraits of considerable complexity. One cannot justify the dialogue without presuming two highly self-conscious beings. From the psychological point of view, there is no simple explanation of such reticence and indirection as theirs.

But, from the narrative point of view, there is a simpler explanation. It may be argued that the dialogue is so arranged, not to exhibit any subtlety of character—and manifestly not to clarify the facts in the minds of either mother or son—but with deliberate cunning, to keep the hearer in the dark so that he may be surprised by the ending.

Either explanation is unacceptable to the orthodox view of the traditional ballad and its ways. The first compels us to assume a subtlety of character portrayal absolutely without parallel, not only among simple ballads of situation, but even in the classes of greatest complexity. People ask questions in ballads in order to learn what they do not know, or—in the case of the riddling ballads—because they believe the persons questioned do not know and cannot answer. *Lord Randal* and *Riddles Wisely Expounded* exemplify the types. Where else than in *Edward*, on the contrary, can one find a character in a ballad asking for information which he or she knows that the informant knows that the questioner already possesses? But if we take the second explanation, we have to acknowledge a narrative technique of highly sophisticated artistry, quite uncharacteristic of the “natural and instinctive” use of conventional formulae in the traditional ballad. Where else can one observe a deliberate withholding of the crucial fact in the story? If the reader shies at the word *deliberate*, he is thrown back upon the other horn of the dilemma. And if it be argued that such a degree of narrative craft is not beyond the presumable skill of a popular singer steeped in the best ballad tradition, we may reasonably ask for other evidence of the same technique in the best ballad tradition.

Elsewhere,⁵ I have pointed out what seemed to me good grounds for regarding Percy's *Edward* with suspicion, if proposed as an authentic exemplar of traditional balladry. Since that time I have been glad to find that Professor Archer Taylor, in a scholarly and ingenious comparison of all the available variants of the ballad, in whatever language, had already arrived, by an entirely different route,

⁵ *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, IV, 1-13.

at the conclusion that the ending of Percy's version must be "surrendered as a contamination", and that in other respects as well the same version is "disordered".⁶ The present note may be viewed as pointing in the same direction.

⁶ Archer Taylor, *Edward and Sven J. Rosengard*, Chicago, 1931, pp. 26, 36, 38. University of California.



THE CAROL OF THE TWELVE NUMBERS ONCE MORE

by Archer Taylor

In a recent number of the SOUTHERN FOLKLORE QUARTERLY (IV, 73-75), Leah Yoffie prints a new version of this curious text and calls for parallels. In offering a bibliography, I shall not cite anything older than Reinhold Köhler's learned notes on the Pehlevi parallel (*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, XXIX [1876], 633-36, which is reprinted with valuable additions in his *Kleinere Schriften*, III (Berlin, 1900), 365-71). Much additional material is collected in J. Bolte and G. Polívka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, III (Leipzig, 1918), 15, note 1. A. M. Espinosa's careful study of the theme in "Orígen oriental y desarrollo historica del cuento de las doce palabras retornadas", *Revista de filología española*, XVII (1930), 390-413 is to be enlarged in his forthcoming *Cuentos populares españoles*. In the meantime, my summary of investigations in the article "Formelmärchen", *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Märchens* (Berlin, 1935), 171-74 can be supplemented by the additions in my *Bibliography of Riddles* ("FF Communications", CXXVI [Helsinki, 1939]), pp. 149-51 and J. H. Cox, *Folk-Songs Mainly from West Virginia* ("National Service Bureau, Publication No. 81-S = American Folk-Song Publications," 5; New York, 1939), No. 17. See further M. Lambertz, *Zwischen Drin und Vojusa* (Vienna, 1922), No. 3; K. Stoffelmeier, "Die sechs Grundwahrheiten", *Blätter für Heimatkunde* (Graz), VII (1929), 48; Gr. (= Gräter?), *Idunna und Hermode*, I (1812), 159-62; G. Henssen, "Finnische Volksrätsel", *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*, XLIII (1935), 77, No. 265; F. Ström, *Svenska folkgåtor* (Stockholm, [1937]), p. 421. A comprehensive study of this very curious text is greatly to be desired.

University of California.

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BOOK REVIEWS

FOLKSONGS OF THE MIDDLE WEST

by A. P. Hudson

Westward—or, to be more exact, Middle-Westward—the star of balladry takes its course. Years ago folksong Argonauts, Louise Pound at Nebraska, A. H. Tolman at Chicago, H. M. Belden at Missouri, and others, scouted out the land and brought back wisps of fleece. But until recently, when four well-freighted argosies came into port, no one seems to have seriously tried to shear the ram. The combined cargoes of nearly 1,800 pages, it would seem, not only adequately represent folksong of the Middle West but fairly sample American folksong in all its important ranges and varieties.

H. M. Belden's *Ballads and Songs*, critically and analytically reviewed elsewhere in this number of SOUTHERN FOLKLORE QUARTERLY, the crown of his long labors and of the Missouri Folk-Lore Society, founded by him, is a noteworthy contribution to American folksong long expected from this pioneer in the field.

BALLADS AND SONGS OF INDIANA, Collected and Edited by Paul G. Brewster, Introduction by James Holly Hanford, Bloomington: Indiana University, c. 1940, Pp. 376, \$2.50, is a work of much later rise than Belden's. It began, like most American collections, in a classroom, only four years ago. Professor Brewster's technique of collecting was the sound and familiar one—through students, newspaper editorials, stories, feature articles, song columns, and perhaps uncounted miles of Fording and Chevroleting. Research was limited to folksongs in English. Widely scattered but representative Indiana communities were raided or tapped. "Ballad-singing in Indiana, as an active tradition," the Editor laments, "is practically non-existent." (The author of this review, who once lingered pleasantly in a barber-shop and a restaurant in a leisurely, drawly little town of Southern Indiana, where he felt very much at home, is surprised at this confession.) The songs, 100 titles, 300 pieces, 37 tunes, are not classified, but they fall into easily recognized categories. The Child ballads, 27 in number, include a late variant of "Erlinton" (with the air) and "Trooper and Maid" (confused in part with "Young Hunting," but with music). Among the later imported pieces "The Battle of the Boyne" is notable. Of special interest, too, is "The Twelve Days of Christmas." *Ballads and Songs of Indiana* has the usual scholarly equipment. It is a nice companion to Stith Thompson's giant *Index-Motif of Folk-Literature*, perhaps the most distinguished of the Indiana University Publications in the field of folklore.

BALLADS AND SONGS FROM OHIO, Collected and Arranged by Mary O. Eddy, New York: J. J. Augustin, c. 1939, Pp. xxvii + 330, \$5.50, begins with a "brief review of Ohio's early history," which, the Editor

thinks, explains the diversity of its traditions. These traditions are spiritedly represented by the 153 songs in her collection, ranging from 25 Child ballads through later English, Scottish, and Irish importations, to native American pieces. "Lamkin" (Child, No. 93), in twenty-one stanzas, is an unusually interesting and well-preserved text. Of the later importations, "The Blind Beggar's Daughter of Bednal Green," which was recorded in Percy's *Reliques*, "keeps the essential features of that long story." The ballads on events in early American history form perhaps the most valuable and distinguished group. At least seven, including "Major Andrew's Execution" (event dating from the 1780's) and "On the Eighth Day of November" (recording an Indian massacre in 1791), make up for our general American paucity of ballads of this sort. The Irish impression on Ohio folksong would seem to have been especially deep. There are about a dozen rollicking pieces in the book, including the broguey "Billy O'Rourke" and "Finnigan's Wake." Of personal interest to this reviewer is "The Little Family," a ballad about the raising of Lazarus corresponding closely to a version he printed in his first collection, "Ballads and Songs from Mississippi," *JAFL*, XXXIX. The supply of tunes for the collection is generous. The notes are brief but of the sort that count. A pleasing feature is the illustrations, many of them from daguerreotypes of folk singers made in their youth, long ago.

BALLADS AND SONGS OF SOUTHERN MICHIGAN, Collected and Edited by Emelyn Elizabeth Gardner and Geraldine Jencks Chickering, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1939, Pp. xx + 501, \$3.50, is a book the contents of which were meant to be visualized, read, sung, and generally enjoyed. The beautiful format, the illustrations, and the music contribute to the achievement of that design. The editors were collectors at Michigan State Normal College and Wayne University as early as the teens of the present century. They published much of their gathering in *JAFL*. Their presently published 201 folksongs are grouped under the captions "Unhappy Love" and "Happy Love" (ratio, numerically 46:33—remarkable for folksong—the Michiganders must be a sanguine lot of lovers); "War"; "Occupations"; "Disasters"; "Crimes"; "Religion"; "Humor"; and "Nursery"—a comprehensive rubric of human interests and activities. Within these categories the songs are arranged roughly according to age. Thus, the old Child pieces (printed, by the way, under common American titles), some twenty-seven in number, are divided among five groups. Of these "King John and the Bishop" is disappointing in having only one stanza, but gratifying in having the tune. Eighteen songs of "War" range geography and history from Sir Walter Raleigh in the lowlands low to "The Sweet Sunny South." Among those under "Religion" "The Twelve Apostles" is precious. Among "Occupations" the lumberjacks roar manfully. One of the jewels is "The Dying Miller." Altogether, the work of these Michigan ladies illustrates both points made by Dean R. B. House's famous story of the Michigan

cavalry. For a while after the Civil War a company occupied the campus of the University of North Carolina. Seeing the alcoves in the University library, these country-boy soldiers decided that whatever their original function they would make good stalls, and accordingly stabled their horses there. Ever after, according to Dean House, Chapel Hill students have been notable for their horse-sense and Michigan horses for their book-learning. The Michigan editors have shown both horse-sense and book-learning.

May the horse-sensible and the book-learned citizens of the Middle West duly appreciate these four fine song books. In the dark days that may be ahead of us here in America, we shall have need for singing. In these folksongs, "preserved on purpose to a life beyond life," as in those from other regions of America, are the spirit and the humor and the hope and the joy that helped to win America. May they help to preserve it for a day when our people may grow tired of cocktails and highballs and long for old-fashioned spring water.

*The University of North Carolina,
Chapel Hill.*

Ballads and Songs Collected by the Missouri Folk-Lore Society. By H. M. Belden. (The University of Missouri Studies, XV, 1.) Columbia, 1940. xviii + 530 pp., \$1.25 (paper bound).

Recently we have been profiting more and more from the patient and enthusiastic labors of the collectors who for many years have been gathering ballads and other folk-songs in widely separated sections of the country. The results have become more and more impressive as volume after volume has appeared and the wealth of the American tradition has been revealed. Certain ideas formerly held about the nature and dissemination of ballads have had to be revised, and new problems suggested by the enormously complicated history of American balladry have come to light for future study. Professor Belden's very welcome book not only provides important material but by its learned and judicious notes makes valuable contributions to our knowledge of the field as a whole. The expectations aroused by his papers and notes on Missouri folk-lore have been richly fulfilled by his admirable book.

Apart from versions of twenty-nine ballads found in Child's collection, he has printed nearly two hundred and forty other pieces of varying interest, most of them narratives, though he has done wisely to include the lyrics and game-songs he has found, as well as a group of four songs in French, which are of singular interest in that three of them at least are survivals from the earliest settlement of Missouri. A point of interest about the collection is that the editor was able to gather so rich a harvest through students of the university, whose enthusiasm he had stimulated. It is the result of no systematic canvas of the state, but probably is adequately representative even

for the Ozarks, though we are told that the "very extensive collection" of Mr. Vance Randolph will, when published, complete the survey of material. But the state of things in Missouri is like that in other states, as studies of the past two decades have proved: traditional singing is not confined to poverty-stricken and isolated sections but is quite as vigorous among more favored groups. In other words, it is not yet a vestigial phenomenon. Furthermore, many of the ballads from Missouri are of a quality textually that indicates a very healthy tradition. That Professor Belden has not recorded more tunes is regrettable, as he himself points out, for there is every probability that the melodies would have equal value with the words. He must be excused for the omission, however, not simply because of his professed incompetence to deal with the music but because he had gone far with his collection before the importance of the relationship between text and melody was as well understood as it is today.

The interplay of oral tradition with transmission through writing or print, which is one of the most baffling problems of folk-lore, has interesting illustrations in Missouri, where singers are still gathering into notebooks for remembrance the "song-ballets" that please them. Mr. Belden records that several such manuscripts have been in his hands. Their existence does not show, any more than do the manuscripts of Danish *viser*, that the tradition of song is approaching death, but it does suggest that we have a great deal still to learn about the means by which ballads are reshaped and preserved.

In spite of the temptation to comment on individual items, I must limit myself to a couple of references of special interest. It is greatly to be hoped that some reader can supply more information about the delightful fragment of Irish origin, *Paddy Darry* (p. 293). The meaning of the line:

Her tongue was slit with the sierel larry

is hard to fathom, but it has the right quality. Very curious also is the little folk-tale *Jesus and Joscs* (p. 102), which gives a new turn to the story of *The Bitter Withy*. It is good evidence for the wide dissemination of that ballad.

G. H. Gerould

Princeton University.

Davy Crockett: American Comic Legend, selected and edited by Richard M. Dorson, with a Foreword by Howard Mumford Jones. Rockland Editions, New York, 1939. xxvi. Pp. 171. \$5.00.

As tall as the tales are which Colonel Davy Crockett constructed about himself, they are overshadowed by the grotesque skyscrapers which unknown story tellers have built around America's first superman, the South's best-known comic character. One of the chief printed sources of information about this legend is the series of illustrated, anonymous Crockett Almanacs published in poor print from 1835 to 1865 in Nashville, New York, Boston, and reprinted

in other cities—almanacs which took their cue from two books of which Crockett was at least partially the author: *The Sketches and Eccentricities of Col. David Crockett*, 1833, and *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 1834. Mr. Dorson's book is a carefully edited collection of diversified materials, illustrated, from these inaccessible almanacs, with a Foreword by Professor Howard Mumford Jones and an introductory chapter by Mr. Dorson on "Frontier Humor and Legend".

As Professor Jones implies, it is lamentable to have to admit that even the Crockett legend is to the average American pretender to knowledge unknown lore—that it is the special property of the literary minded and the student of folk culture; whereas "If, seventy-five years ago, anyone had suggested that Davy Crockett was somebody you had to look up in a book, he would have been looked upon as insane and un-American. Davy Crockett was a living reality like George Washington, Napoleon, and Satan."

If in American literary tradition there is no body of ancient legend and myth, there is a comic lore of the frontier, where fighting, hunting, and courting were the chief diversions, equally arduous. On the frontier, tall tales and anecdotes involving these sports multiplied almost as rapidly as the population did and soon clustered loosely around nuclear figures. "A host of regional demigods arose to bestride the forests, the plains and the rivers, each individually splashed with local color, yet all stamped with the one die of the American myth-forged," Mr. Dorson says. "The generic figure is the eccentric frontiersman glorified, a braggart and a brawler, picaresque, earth-tainted, whimsically grotesque, not quite superman or hero or god . . . , but a comic embodiment of all three, inevitably spawned in the oral humor of elemental men." Few of these demigods have been enshrined in print. This makes the Crockett almanacs, where one gets a close view of a completely developed legendary personality, all the more important, especially to the student of folkways and the cultural historian of the frontier. Moreover, as entertainment for the general reader the Crockett legend is probably the most lyrically intense and original example of that branch of frontier humor classifiable as Southern or Southwestern, distinguished by its local color, and, as Mr. Dorson points out, made agreeable by "the frontier boast, backwoods invective and imagery, racy dialect, ugly people, earthiness". In Crockett's own day and for thirty years after his heroic death in Texas in 1836 the Crockett tales circulated through "that wide portion of the West known as the old Southwest, which spread from Kentucky and Tennessee in a broad encirclement through Georgia and the Gulf States to Texas and Arkansas, reaching beyond the Mississippi".¹

To satisfy both the general reader and the special student of the American mind, Mr. Dorson has culled from the Crockett almanacs the best stories and arranged them under eight loose classifications:

¹ Constance Rourke, *American Humor*, New York, p. 66.

The Legend Full-Blown, Ring-Tailed Roarers, Doughty Dames (one of whom could eat with one corner of her mouth, whistle with the other, and scream with the middle all at one time), Ben Harding (fellow frontiersman and Congressman), Davy Conquering Man, Davy Conquering Beast, Pedlars and Pukes, and Davy in Lighter Moments.

One could hardly hope to find another popular American hero with a more entertaining family and a larger repertoire of personal reminiscences of heroic deeds. It is the rare baby who is brought up on whiskey pap and rattlesnake eggs; who has a father able at one hundred and forty-nine to "grin a hail-storm into sunshine"; or a mother one year younger able to "jump a seven rail fence backwards, dance a hole through a double oak floor, . . . crack walnuts for her great grandchildren with her front teeth"; or who has a grandmother with such a "damned stubborn cough, and so echoaciously loud, that it used to set the cider barrels rolling about the cellar." Likewise, it is an unusual young man who cures himself of dangerous love by swallowing a bolt of lightning ("My eyes! it war as if seven buffaloes war kicking in my bowels. . . . I had a sore gizzard for two weeks. . . . I have never felt love since."); or who escapes from a tornado by grasping a fork of lightning and greasing it with rattlesnake oil; or who lubricates the frozen axis of the earth with bear oil and thaws the sun loose from between two cakes of ice when all creation is frozen. It is a fortunate man who has a sister who could sing a psalm so "you'd a thought all the trees in creation war organ pipes, and a harrycane war blowin' the bellows". His daughters, too, were chips off the old block: "the tallest and the fattest, and sassiest gals in America," able to "out-run, out-jump, out-fight, and out-scream any crittur in creation." It is no wonder that his death "war a great loss to the country, and the world, and to old Kaintuck in particular. Thar were never known such a member of Congress as Crockett, and never will be agin." Nor is it any wonder "Thar's a great rejoicin' among the bears of Kaintuck, and the alligators of the Massissippi rolls up thar shining ribs to the sun, . . . The rattlesnakes come up out of thar holes and frolic within ten foot of the clearings, and the foxes goes to sleep in the goose-pens. It is bekase the rifle of Crockett is silent forever, and the print of his moccasins is found no more in our woods."

Although this popular hero "are dead now, and may he rest forever and a day arter," he comes to life in Mr. Dorson's selections and convinces the reader that he (the "Kurnill") "can run faster,—jump higher,—squat lower,—dive deeper,—stay longer under,—and come out drier, than any man in the whole country." In one word, says the campaigning hero, "I'm a screamer, and have got the roughest rocking horse, the prettiest sister, the surest rifle and the ugliest dog in the district. I'm a leetle the savagest crittur you ever did see. . . . I can walk like an ox, run like a fox, swim like an eel, yell like an Indian, fight like a devil, spout like an earthquake, make love like a mad bull, and swallow an Injun whole without choking if you

butter his head and pin his ears back." Voters were impressed then; readers are now.

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Herman E. Spivey

Ord og Sed. Organ for Nemndi til Gransking av Norsk Nemningsbruk. Vol. I, 1934, ed. by Nils Lid; Vols. II-IV, 1935-37, ed. by Nils Lid and Svale Solheim. Oslo: Noregs Boklag I Umbod.

The primary purpose of the editors of these interesting volumes is to secure information about words—especially those which are and have long been current in the many dialects of Norway. Quite properly the editors are concerned with pronunciation (phonic and phonological variation as well as intonation, which is of particular importance in Norwegian dialects) and vocabulary. But their emphasis is less upon these than upon word meaning. This they rightly conceive to be something more complex than can be indicated by substituting a synonym or two. They seek to determine all of the subtle overtones of meaning which custom, taboo, superstition, and (to lesser extent) social stratification, geographic variation, and time exert upon a word. Their investigation of folk speech therefore becomes chiefly a study of folklore.

A generation or more ago the Danish scholar, Pastor H. F. Feilberg, aided by Otto Jespersen, showed how a dialect study (*Bidrag til en ordbog over jyske almuesmål*) could effectively combine linguistic and folkloristic material. Wright in his *English Dialect Dictionary* did not follow Feilberg's example, for the English work is almost entirely linguistic (in the arbitrarily restricted sense of being concerned with pronunciation, etymology, and vocabulary) and contains as little folklore as is possible in a dictionary which attempts to give the meaning and illustrative quotations of dialect words. Whether or not they have consciously followed Wright, American linguists investigating our folk speech have continued his practice of giving scant attention to word meaning, and of emphasizing pronunciation (cf. *The Linguistic Atlas*) or vocabulary (cf. the various types of word lists in *American Speech* and *Dialect Notes*). On the other hand, folklorists, even when they directly investigate folk speech, show little concern for linguistic matters other than word meaning. The result of course is an unfortunate dichotomy in the study of American folk speech—a dichotomy which the plan of *Ord og Sed* obviates.

Ord og Sed is not a dialect dictionary. It is rather the preliminary work necessary for such a venture (and in this respect is somewhat similar to *Dialect Notes*). Each of the yearly volumes consists of a number of pamphlets, varying in length from two to forty pages. These pamphlets usually contain an introductory discussion of a group of closely allied words, followed by a questionnaire. The discussions serve a double purpose: (1) They summarize what is already known about the words in question, thus providing

a useful and often exhaustive account which has little of the fragmentary and trifling quality so annoying and so often characteristic of published preliminary work. (2) They give the informants a general survey of the problems involved, stimulate their interest, and enlist their cooperation. In addition they provide full and precise directions for replying to the questionnaires. The questionnaires are skillfully and tactfully designed to secure first-hand information about certain words; the objects or activities these words designate; the customs, superstitions, etc., associated with the words or the objects. From the nature of the questions and the instructions one may gather that the informants are both intelligent and interested in the project.

The scope of the work may be indicated by a somewhat random sampling: Superstitions — spiders and other insects as weather prophets, as pointers to various desired objects, no. 17 ff.; concerning dwarfs, no. 22. Taboos—certain words designating home, wife, etc., not used at sea, no. 9; animal names, no. 10. Traditions, customs, beliefs, and charms—words, implements, methods used in the carpentering craft, no. 2; used in fishing, no. 4, 26 ff.; used in harvesting, no. 5; types of house construction, names and appearance of various kinds of doors, windows, gables, etc., no. 16, 21; associated with courting and marriage, no. 64 ff. Counting-out rimes and devices, no. 7. (In ball playing a device is used which in precise detail is found in Florida and no doubt elsewhere in this country. The bat is tossed back and forth three times, then the choosers grasp it hand over hand. The last one must have a full three-finger hold, and must whirl it around his head three times.)

The longest pamphlet (no. 73, by Nils Lid) is an interesting archaeological study. In 1918 a ski was found buried in a marsh at Furnes, in Hedmark. Thirteen years later Lid examined it, and sent samples of the turf still clinging to it, together with turf taken from a testing made at the place where the ski was found, to Erik Granlund in Sweden. By the method of pollen-analysis, Granlund determined that the ski dates from the early iron age. Lid discusses this type of ski, its wide use in many parts of Europe in the past, its survival in parts of Norway till the present. It is a clear and thorough study based upon a considerable amount of painstaking research and utilizing what, I believe, is a new technique (pollen analysis).

The four volumes represent but the beginning of a great undertaking in the systematic dissemination and collection of many types of folk material. Among a people with so long and unbroken a tradition, this material is particularly rich. It has, in addition, particular significance for us, since we of the English-American world have so often and so long been subject to Scandinavian influence, for from the eighth century to the present, without a single protracted interruption, we have felt the impact of Scandinavian culture. In the Mid-West, where Norwegian settlement in the latter half of the 19th century was particularly extensive, this cultural impact is the most recent and most pervasive. It would be very interesting indeed if

someone would undertake an investigation in this area, using both the material and technique of Lid and Solheim. If it were prosecuted with no more than half of their thoroughness and intelligence it would be an excellent work.¹

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¹ Professors Nils Flaten, G. T. Flom, Einar Haugen, and others have published studies, which however are mainly or entirely linguistic. Recently Professor Haugen has in an excellent monograph ("Language and Immigration", printed in *Norwegian-American Studies and Records*, X, Northfield, Minn., 1938) surveyed broadly the social implications and factors in the language changes of this region. It is interesting to note that he uses material from no. 5 of *Ord og Sed*.

Bibliography of Latin American Folklore. By Ralph Steele Boggs. New York: The H. W. Wilson Publishing Company. Pp. 109. 1940.

A bibliography is nothing more than a tool to be used by specialists in a given field. A good bibliography, therefore, should be specific, systematic, and properly annotated.

The work which has been done in Latin American folklore is so diversified and so widely scattered geographically that any scholar who wishes to make a study in this field finds difficult access to the work already done by other men. Professor Boggs has rendered a great service to folklore by making a selective bibliography from the vast amount of reference material that he has accumulated through years of tedious and painstaking work. The selecting process in itself is an enormous task, but one that will save the scholar an untold amount of unnecessary search.

In sifting the various sources of published studies, Professor Boggs has again exercised great care and thorough scholarship. From a title alone it is oftentimes difficult to determine the nature and extent of the work which an author has prepared. A bibliography that draws a distinction between general and specific works has already gone far in saving an investigator a great deal of time and effort.

In view of the approach usually made in folklore research this bibliography is particularly well prepared. The separate listings of bibliographies and periodicals will enable a research worker to amplify his field of investigation. The topical arrangement of material within each country is a boon to him who is particularly interested in some phase of folklore covering the entire Latin America. A casual glance at the bibliography will convince the reader of the accessibility of the works which Professor Boggs has found worthy of publication.

The fact that this *Bibliography of Latin American folklore* is annotated will safeguard the researcher against misleading titles. The author is further to be commended for having indexed his

bibliography. This is further evidence of the thoroughness with which the book has been prepared.

A. L. Campa

Juegos y canciones infantiles de Puerto Rico. By María Cadilla de Martínez. San Juan Puerto Rico. Pp. 259. IV. 1940.

The author's purpose in presenting this study of childhood games and songs is quite evident from an examination of chapter headings; the introductory chapters include: The Structure of Children's Games and Songs, Origin of Games and Their Social Value, Physiological Value of Games, The Spontaneous Ethics of Play, Games and Teaching, Recommendations to Parents and Teachers. Her collected material is classified according to origin: Graeco-Latin Heritage, Heritage from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Games and Songs from the Eighteenth Century to the Present.

This organization of materials makes consultation rather difficult for the collector interested in variants. The historical presentation necessitates perusal of the entire book in order to find a given song. An index, not alphabetical but by chapters, does not alleviate the difficulty a great deal.

Nevertheless, the book does contain an extensive and valuable collection of games and songs, which more than repays the effort of searching for them. One finds scores of familiar ballads here. Among the "Romances tradicionales" of decidedly ancient pedigree are: "Blanca Flor," earlier forms of which are contained in the collections of Menéndez y Pelayo, Durán and in the *Cancionero sin año*; the pathetic "Angelina" (generally called "Delgadina" in the Western Hemisphere), derived by Menéndez y Pelayo from an episode of the *Poema de Apolonio*; "Isabel" (an amusing parody of which is sung by the children of Tampa); and "Gerineldo", called by Campa the most widely diffused Spanish ballad in the Southwest. Among those of a somewhat later vintage might be mentioned the plaintive "Me casó mi madre" and the well known "Mambrú se va a la guerra" ("Malborough s'en va-t-en guerre"); four versions are presented of the latter, of which the fourth is an abbreviated parody:

Mambrú se va a la guerra
montado en una perra,
la perra se cayó
Membrú se escocotó.

In spite of a deplorable carelessness in printing this is a work well worth the effort of anyone interested in the study of the Spanish folksong.

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